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Washington, D.C. 20520

SEP 2 T 2002

Senator Grassley:

Thank you for your letter of August 5, 2002, regarding a constituent communication from  raises an important question, although we must first clarify that there is no pipeline protection program in Venezuela. However, the U.S. Government is implementing a pipeline protection program in Colombia. This program is financed by International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement funds, rather than by Anti-Terrorism Assistance funds.

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Colombia has three State Department-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations operating within its borders: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). Each of these groups - with a combined total

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS  
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of approximately 30,000 fighters - undermines the security of Colombians, actively targets civilian non-combatants, and prevents the development of a peaceful, democratic society. Public opinion polls and the presidential election results in May underline the terrorist groups' lack of any meaningful support from the general populace. Average citizens have been terrorized for nearly four decades in a never-ending cycle of violence, and they clearly desire a break from the past.

Terrorism is an inescapable fact of life in Colombia, one of the most violent nations in the world at this time. The FARC and the AUC single out politicians for special intimidation (the FARC has threatened to kill every mayor in the country). But consider what the actions of this group mean to ordinary citizens: all it takes is to be in the wrong place at the wrong time to become a victim in Colombia. It is not safe to drive down the roads outside of any city; you can be kidnapped anywhere, at any time. Sometimes it is not safe to be in the same city as a political leader. In August, the FARC fired mortar shells in an attempt to assassinate

The Honorable

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Charles E. Grassley,  
United States Senate.

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President Uribe at his inauguration; all missed the mark and instead killed 21 people in a poor neighborhood of Bogota. it is not safe to live in your own town; in May, a FARC-fired mortar shell landed on the roof of a church in Bojaya, killing 119 villagers who had taken refuge there in an attempt to escape the fighting between the FARC and the AUC. The human toll of the conflict in Colombia averages 3000 victims per year, with another 3000 more becoming victims of savage kidnappings for ransom.

The terrorist acts of the FARC and ELN not only cost human lives, but they also take a large toll on the economy of

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Colombia. The frequent attacks on the Cano Limon oil pipeline cost \$500 million in lost revenue in 2001, and it is difficult to underestimate the negative impact on investment and economic growth from the unending cycle of terrorist violence in Colombia. These terrorist attacks are designed to further weaken the Colombian state, rob the economy of a much-needed engine for growth, and thus create an environment in which the terrorists can operate without effective interference from state authorities. United States assistance is intended to begin providing training and equipment to Colombian military and police forces to defend this vital economic lifeline from further debilitating attacks.

The Colombian government has requested our assistance in its domestic conflicts, and we have made the decision to stand with our hemispheric friends in their struggle. Defense of the Cano Limon pipeline is just one avenue in which we are helping Colombia to regain control of its destiny, set its own house in order after a 38-year struggle, and reduce the threat of instability in the region.

Sincerely,

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Paul V. Kelly  
Assistant Secretary  
Legislative Affairs

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